













LIFE,

THE PREPARATION FOR DEATH:

A SERMON,

PREACHED

AT GREAT ST. MARY'S, CAMBRIDGE,

ON THE

FIRST FRIDAY IN LENT, 1867.

BY THE

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*THIRD THOUSAND.*

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TO THOSE  
IN THE CONGREGATION AT  
GREAT ST. MARY'S, CAMBRIDGE,  
WHO,  
IN THE SOLEMN THOUGHT OF DEATH,  
PURPOSED TO LIVE TO GOD,  
THIS SERMON  
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,  
WITH THE PRAYER  
THAT HE WHO HAS BEGUN A GOOD WORK IN THEM,  
WILL PERFORM IT UNTO THE DAY OF  
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

why misquote the words of  
scripture

A

## SERMON,

*&c.*

HEB. ix. 27.

“It is appointed unto all men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

WHY is there such awe in that brief word “death?” Why, if we could see along this church a long solemn funeral procession, in which those narrow dwelling-places wherein our bodies shall one day resolve into their dust, should pass before us, each, as they shall one day be, as in God’s sight they are, inscribed with our several names, the number of our fleeting years, the year, month, day, which closed them; why should we look each with an awed gaze upon our own? Whence is that cold pang which brave men have felt on the battle eve? Or why do crowds fly, like scared sheep, before a pestilence? Is it only the heathen thought, that “*linquenda tellus et domus et placens uxor?*” Or is it a shrinking from the bodily circumstances of death, that “this sensible warm motion shall become

a kneaded clod?" Or is it that life and its prospects are so bright, the thought of self-development so grand, the pleasures of this life so dazzling, the joy of working among our fellow-men so satisfying, life itself so buoyant, that we should long to have our allotted threescore years and ten measured out to us, or the ten years of toil and sorrow which fill out the fourscore years? Life is joyous, because it flows from God, the source of life; duty, well-fulfilled, sheds peace on the soul, for it places us so far in harmony with God; pure love engoldens life, because love is the created image of the Being of God, Who is love, a ray from the essential bliss of God. But if we knew that we were to pass from joy to joy; that life was only to flow over the barrier which bounds our vision, then to glide on more brilliant and heaven-lit than before, who would not exchange this dying life for the land of the living? It is not the mere loss of this life or its joys, which gives that start of fear. Loss we may grieve over; it may make our sun go down at noonday. It does not give that piercing shock of personal fear. The poet truly said, "Conscience does make cowards of us all." For the Apostle said, "The sting of death is sin." Hence was it that a brave man, sent on a forlorn hope, turned back to meet a disgraced death. Death confronted him; one deadly unrepented sin flashed on his mind; he dared meet death; he dared not meet an unreconciled God.

Why did the sight of the decayed remains of his

pious and beautiful queen so affect the young Duke of Gandia<sup>1</sup>, that, for his thirty-three remaining years, he never forgot that sight, and at once died to the world, that at his death he might live to God? Why did that haircloth beneath the dress of the just-departed wife of Italy's dearest hymn-writer<sup>2</sup>, so move his soul that he thenceforth renounced the world whose pomps he loved, and loved to be counted a fool for the love of Christ? Why, in our own days, did that chance glance at the morning dress laid aside for dinner, awakening the thought of our laying aside this our mortal frame, change in an instant the whole current of the life of a noble convert, while yet young, and make him give his life, his all to God<sup>3</sup>?

What gives to death this solemn aspect?

The answer is simple. We can but die once. Every error, negligence, ignorance, sin, can be, in some sort, undone; our dear Lord prayed for His executioners; the guilt of the Crucifixion then of the Son of God, the Redeemer, could be undone; His Blood was shed for those who shed it; nay, it overflowed to be the source not of cleansing only or of healing, but of living union with Himself. "The Blood which in their phrenzy they shed, believing they drank," says St. Augustine so often. But if we fail in death, it cannot be repaired. All of life is summed up there. Men fall, rise, relapse, recover,

<sup>1</sup> S. Francis Borgia.

<sup>2</sup> Jacopono da Todi.

<sup>3</sup> This history is printed, not published.

relapse again, and are again restored by the grace of God in life. But what in death? "As the tree falleth, so it shall lie." It may have inclined this way or that; the breath of God's good Spirit, the impulse of His inspirations, the soft violence of His grace, the strong blows of His merciful visitations seemed to impel it one way. Inured habit bowed it the other; it fell; it cannot rise. "Where it falleth, there it shall lie." "It is appointed unto all men once to die<sup>4</sup>," and after that—what, a second trial? a second plank after shipwreck? a fresh use of all the experience gained in life? However any may act, you too know that God saith none of these things, but "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment."

But, because death is an act so alone, so single, so distinct and separate in its nature and its issue from all besides in life, does it therefore stand insulated? If one were to judge from the ways and words of mankind, it must surely be so. It is the one thing in this life which is absolutely certain! How long we shall abide here, what shall befall us to-morrow, in what way we shall pass out of this life; early, late, sudden, slow; with ease or pain; we can form no guess. The green leaf is rent off, while the sere yellow leaf, ready to drop of itself, remains. "With forethought," said the Heathen poet, "does God overwhelm with a murky night the issue of the future."

<sup>4</sup> Heb. ix. 27.

Every other trial we may escape. This, this alone is certain. All depends on it. Eternity hangs upon the moment of death; eternal bliss, eternal woe. And yet who prepares for it? Were it any trial in this life, on which the provision for our future depended, what care would men take! Were it an examination in this place, which should give you good credentials in this life, every right means is used, every nerve is strained. And yet the judgment of after-life often reverses this judgment as to its outset. The loss may be repaired. But where the judgment is final, irreversible, irreparable, where the stake is infinite, endless, the bliss known to God Alone Who is the Bliss and Joy of His own, the loss unendurable, who well-nigh prepares, who thinks of it? The thought is an unwelcome guest, to whom men refuse entrance, if they can; if they cannot, they are fertile in excuses for dismissing him. One thing alone they never say, "Come again to-morrow." They would fain never think of him, till he comes to carry them to judgment. We know that we must die. Why embitter life with the thought of it?

*"Præsentem rape lætus horam, et linque futura."*

And yet how should it be that every thing of moment in this life, which has to be done well, is to be studied, and that the weightiest act of all should need no study, no preparation? Is there no science of dying well? no "disce mori?" Has our mer-

ciful Father destined all our whole race to pass through this awful irreparable ordeal, and shod our feet with no preparation, whereby we may tread unharmed on its bars of fiery iron? Does He guide us step by step through this life's wilderness, when our bodies are unworn, our minds in their full vigour, and does He leave that last act severed from all before, when the body is enfeebled by age, disease, approaching dissolution, and the soul distracted by pain, worn by sleeplessness, wearied by the weariness of its poor brother, the body, with which it is so mysteriously united, from which it is now about to be rent away,—does He leave us to enter upon that last decisive act with no preparation, no fore-arming, to seek for His grace, pardon, assisting strength in what way we best can, aided by such prayers of the priest or of our sorrowing friends as we can get, and fortified by His sacrament?

To judge from men's ways, one should think that such was their belief. What else means this picture of death-bed repentance, which so many have in their minds, as though a man might live through this life without God, and then, by one act at its close, sever himself from all his past, and live with God for all eternity? How comes the name "death-bed repentance" to be so familiar to us, as to have become a sort of proverb? How is it, that we clergy so often content ourselves with the true warning, that no one knows that he shall have any



death-bed, upon which to enact this his ideal of the close of life, this phantasm of repentance, as though, if death-bed there would surely be, men were not so mistaken in calculating upon it? True, that the very possibility that there should be no death-bed is awful enough. What of those hundreds whom one explosion in a mine sent into eternity with just that moment's notice of the coming sound; what if, when the men of a whole village were last year so cut off at once, one man in that whole village had continued in sin, calculating on a death-bed repentance? Souls pass into eternity every day; "cut off even in the blossom of their sin," without one moment seemingly to say one "Lord, have mercy." But to dwell on this alone would be almost to grant that if they had a death-bed, on which to repent, they would repent. I do not mean that there are *not* death-bed repentances. God has placed no limit to the wonderfulness, the unaccountableness of His mercies. His mercy outruns, overpowers, overmasters His justice; and I heartily believe, that He would not part, if He could, with one soul which He has made. Doubtless, the hour of death is an hour when God is very busy with the soul, because it is its last. When the tongue can give no utterance of its hope in Jesus; when we have ceased to pray with it, as thinking it insensible; when human means are passed; when, perhaps, even friends have ceased to pray *for* it, as believing it to be gone; still often, while it yet lingers, God is pleading with

it, and works in it what the Judgment Day alone will reveal. But taking into account more than all which experience tells us of the uncovenanted mercies of God; counting up all we know of those, whom devout fervent prayer has rescued out of the very jaws of the dragon, so that, at God's bidding, he cast them forth, when already half-devoured, and thankfully adoring the incredible, fathomless depths of the Divine mercy and compassion; yet who has told us that these *were* mere death-bed repentances; that they stood in no connexion with any thing in the past life; that they were mere displays of the absolute sovereignty of Divine mercy; manifestations only of the unrestrained omnipotence of the Blood of Jesus, incompressible by any laws save of His Omniscient Wisdom? We see the fact, the marvellous, miraculous interposition of Divine love; the secret springs are hid in the depths of the Divine knowledge.

It is almost a sacred proverb: "He cannot die ill, who has lived well; and hardly does he die well, who has lived ill." What then are we to think of those awful cases, where a man, who *seems* to have lived well, dies ill? There was so much seeming good, and yet the man died an apostate! The tortures were severe. But for God's grace, perhaps, we too might all have failed under them. Yet he died, denying Jesus, his only Hope. Pelagius had even a name of sanctity; commenced his heresy in his conception of man's perfectibility; we part with

him out of sight, anathematizing himself in hypocrisy<sup>5</sup>. Eutyches was all-but-closing a venerated life, chosen for seeming graces to be the head of those who had forsaken all for Christ. He died, the parent of a soul-destroying heresy, denying his Lord who bought him. Judas had faith to cast out devils; he gave up all for Christ; we cannot even imagine that he entered the Apostolate, already a thief and a hypocrite, or with the matured will to give the reins to that covetousness which destroyed him. His guilt was unknown to all except our Lord. Graces he must have had, to justify our Lord's selection of him to that closest nearness to Himself, who was among those of whom He said, "Behold My Mother and My brethren." In these horrible cases, we take refuge in the thought that these were not sudden unprepared apostasies. In Judas, the lurking evil has been revealed to us, lest the unexplained terrific close should paralyse us. "Who then can be saved," since one in such nearness to our Lord perished? We cannot endure the thought that "the grey-haired saint should fail at last." We feel sure that if he perished, we must have been deceived about him. A life-long real service drop blighted to the ground, when it seemed to be opening to flower in the Paradise of God, unless there had been a cankerworm, buried deep at the heart, which ate out its life, while all without was blossom-

<sup>5</sup> At the Synod of Diospolis

ing, with such hopeful show ! It is too horrible ! The ground seems to be giving way under one's feet ; they seem well-nigh to have slipped from the Rock of ages ; one would seem to be walking amid the slime-pits of the accursed cities, where to fall is to sink into the abyss of Hell. But no ! God has shown us in Judas the preparations for that horrible fall. He has told us, that, even amid that seeming service, his was faith divorced from love ; that he was, at once (O, horrible mixture), an Apostle and (so Jesus warned him) " a devil."

But if then we may hope that in Judas we see the secret of those horrible deaths, which close a life of outward show ; if in him we see the secret threads, which, running through his life, twined themselves continually closer and thicker and more consolidated, until they bound him fast, and dragged him to his eternal ruin ; if we see in him the forerunners of that seemingly sudden, hopeless fall ; if we seem to see, why, after the disappointment about the ointment and our Lord's mild rebuke, he yielded himself to Satan, replaced the lost gain at the price of his Master's life, and, so already committed, was not melted by his Lord's humility in washing his feet, and received to his own damnation the Sacrament of his Lord's Body ; why, then, dare we think, that, in those opposite miracles of mercy, there were no forerunners of a partially accepted grace, even amidst a life of sin ? If an impenitent death, after seeming good in life, is, probably, amid whatever

green and gay freshness of the leaves, the end of an unfruitful life, barren of real good, why should we think that those stupendous miracles of mercy in death-bed conversions were not God's crowning gifts of mercy to souls, whom He had in lifetime secretly prepared to accept that mercy? Of course, there can be no question of merit, nor of grace of congruity, where the fitting sequel of a God-forgetting life were that dreadful place, into which the Psalmist says "the forgetters of God shall be cast." Man cannot merit either God's justifying grace (since when unjustified, or forfeiting God's free gift of justification, he has "great deserts, but evil;" he merits, not heaven but hell), or God's last crowning gift of final perseverance. But merit is one thing, God's preparation of the heart is quite another. And we, who see not as God seeth, who discern not the secret springs which God alone moveth, how should we know that God had not all along, by secret inspirations of His grace, which were obeyed for the time, prepared the heart for that seemingly sudden change of a death-bed repentance? Sudden, at last, is oftentimes that last act of conversion, whereby the fallen Christian is anew translated from the power of Satan into God. But God surrounds all with His exciting forecoming grace; and that last wave of grace, which bears the sinner back to God, has probably been preceded by many an eddy, in which the soul, now as it seems advancing, now falling back, has come within the sphere of that last

mightiest grace, whereby God, in His mercy, “ binds him fast to the sure shore of love.”

But if any be (as we dare not say they are not) very hopelessly unlikely to be the objects of those rare manifestations of God’s Almighty mercy, it would be, one should think, those, who should live an evil life, encouraging themselves by the hope of a death-bed repentance. For what is this but to sin in full light and with full choice, turning the grace of God into an encouragement to sin, choosing deliberately what would offend God, with the hope of bribing His awful justice at the end by the mockery of an unfelt repentance ?

Life, then, whether we will it or will it not, is a preparation for our death. Ceaselessly, noiselessly, swiftly, smoothly flows on and on and on the stream of time ; it gathers strength with our weakness ; slow perhaps in our early wondering years, rapid beyond all measure, as less and less of it remains to us ; yet charged with every sin and folly, which stained its earlier course, and “ darker as it downward bears,” unless its foulness have been cleansed by penitence and the Blood of Jesus. Of itself every day is the parent of the morrow. As day to day carries on the wondrous tale of the loving-kindness of God, so day transmits to day the gathering, deepening sum of human sin. God gives grace on grace. The grace of God well-used is the pledge of enlarged grace. Man adds sin to sin. The sin of to-day is the preparation and earnest of to-

morrow's sin, and that of to-morrow's and to-morrow's and to-morrow's, till that last day, which knows no morrow save eternity. To-day's evil-speaking of another, ensures to-morrow's; to-day's oath, or bad conversation, or freedom with Holy Scripture, or irreverent jest, or negligence in prayer, or forgetfulness of self-examination, or sloth, which leaves no time for the morning's prayer; or engrossment in the evening's occupation, which leaves the soul too dead-tired for the evening's; or slovenly preparation for Holy Communion, or still more slovenly thanksgiving after it, are so many moral earnestnesses that the same will be on the morrow or on the next occasion. Much more will this week's deadly sin, but for some mighty interposition of God's grace, be the forerunner and forthbringer of the next week's, or next month's deadly sin. And if so, when should it cease, if not now? Look back to past years. Did you think as to any negligence of any religious habit, which you were taught in childhood, or as to any thing half-known to be wrong, that it would have lasted until now? The act of the child became the habit of the man. Why should not the habit of youth be that of middle age, and the wont of middle age be the inured custom of advanced age, and the inured custom of advanced age be the necessity of old age (if you ever see it), and wherever death should find you, the habit of that age be the ruling thought in death?

Life, will we, nill we, is the preparation for death.

*we<sup>2</sup>* We live, but to die. Our death is not the end only, it is the object of our life. Our journey's end, not the journey itself, is that journey's object. It is this we have in view ; this relieves its weariness, its monotony, its irksomeness. It was for this that God sent us into the world ; it is to this end that He has been guiding us by all the varieties of His Providence ; for this it is that He has provided us with all the richness and prodigality of His grace ; it is for this that He has invented all the fertility of His resources to save us. For death knits in one our time and our eternity. Time and eternity meet in that one point. As we are in that last moment of time, such are we throughout eternity.

How then can we prepare for that moment, upon which our all hangs, and in which we can do so little, nay, in which almost all must be done for us ? What can men do then mostly, but repeat what they have done before ? What do we find, even in death-beds, where we hope that all is well ? If they have confessed before in life, they make what confession they can, and hear once more the earnest of our Lord's absolving voice, "Thy sins be forgiven thee ;" if they have communicated before, they fortify themselves once more for that last conflict with their Redeemer's Body and Blood ; they attend, as well as they can, to prayers said for them ; they say, as they can, some words of old-remembered hymns, some fragments of prayers, some condensed words for mercy, "Jesu, Saviour, save me ;" at last, they



can say the one word, Jesu, or form it in their hearts, or look at some representation of Him, or gaze up to heaven where He is interceding for them, and long that He should have pity on them. All, good things in themselves. For He has said, "Whoso cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." Good, if by God's grace they are done sincerely; comforts to survivors. But are such few acts, even if God continue the grace to do them, are such few acts the turning-points of life and death? Are these the preparations for the sight of God? Is it to produce these, that Jesus shed His Blood? Would they replace a wasted life? Would they efface whole multitudes of life-long sins? Is a commonplace end (such as experience shows that most ends are) a happy good-foreboding close of a commonplace life, in which the sins of youth (diverted from their course by marriage) have issued in a respectable, meaningless, objectless life?

It has been said by some, with a holy boldness, that if one had the sins of the whole world upon him, and could by one mighty act, ensouled by the grace of God, will, for the love of God and in faith in Jesus, that they were all undone, and if he yielded up his soul in that act, they would be all forgiven. No one, who has known aught of God's mercy, could limit the possibilities of God's mercies; for he himself would be to himself the greatest marvel of God's forbearing mercy. I speak not of God's Omnipotence of mercy, but of the narrowness of man's

reception of that mercy. And what do we see? What do we hear of? I speak not, I deny not, I believe a vast manifold work of God in that all-but-sacrament of death; that last moment, which God hath reserved to Himself, wherein to speak to the soul yet unwon by His grace, and say to it, “Wilt thou still reject Me? Why wilt thou die?” I believe that God will not part with any soul, which *will* be saved, seeing He has given His Son to die for it. But whatever mercies of this sort God has in store for the ignorant, for those who knew not what they did, for whom especially Jesus prayed, beholding them afar through all those centuries on His Cross—what have we to do therewith, who live in His Gospel’s full light, on whom no blindness falls, unless self-created, whom He has fenced round from so many temptations, of whom so many, through their imaginations, become their own tempters?

But, apart from these, what do so many of those tranquil deaths look like?—the supernatural peace of God shed into the soul; the Presence of the Divine Comforter; the love which taketh away fear; the voice of Jesus bidding the soul to “Come?” Blessed souls, to which such deaths come in God’s mercy, because they have ever had a reverent fear of death; because they have ever dwelt near the Cross of Jesus, and looked up to His Divine Eye of love, and the Precious Blood has bedewed, cleansed, healed, sanctified them. Then, it is the holy close of a life near to God. Death, meditated on, has

done its work before its time. Jesus is with the soul in the valley of death, which has sought to live by His side in the world's varied pilgrimage.

But is death the only spot in this world in which there is no room for self-deceit? Will those who, by saying, "Lord, Lord," have through life compounded with themselves for not doing the things which Jesus said, awake of themselves to see, that they have made a life-long mistake? Will those in whom worldliness has stifled the life of God in the soul for years, and who have been on easy terms with God, owning Him respectfully, yet letting Him interfere very little with their outward lives, and not at all with their inward, open their eyes and see through the thick mist which they have gathered round them? Plainly they do not. For what more terrific than to find, at life's close, that life, amid imagined services, or, at least, not disservice of God, had been one real rebellion of self-will? And these are at peace.

Such easy deaths look like the unspiritual ends of unspiritual lives. A hopeful easy death is rather the sequel of a life passed in awe and fear. Fear of death in life is commonly taken away in death; but, short of absolute despair of God's mercy, I would rather witness any agony than see a spiritually unfearing death as the sequel of a spiritually unfearing life. I would not dare to ask for an end, even spiritually painless; I would only ask for a sinless death, and leave the rest with God.

Death has a great work for grace to do, in itself, without weighting it with a work not its own. It is a startling prayer which the Church puts into our mouths by the graves of those we love, winding up its appeal for God's mercy in the solemn cadence, "O holy and merciful Saviour, Thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Thee." We should not have framed this prayer ourselves. Yet those who framed it had had before their eyes, death and the trials incidental to death.

Every sort of death has its own trials. Death with sharp pain, lest it break endurance; death with lingering pains, lest it wear out patience. Then the Evil one has studied our characters all our life long, and applies the knowledge, with all his accumulated experience of ourselves, our weak points, whereby we most easily fall, and of others' death-beds, and his supernatural skill against us. It has become a sort of proverb, "The ruling passion strong in death." This too must come from large experience. What, if that ruling passion have been something antagonistic to simplicity of character, to the tranquil workings of grace? What, if it have been vain-glory, or love of praise, or vanity, or impatience, or love of ease, or again disputing, or censoriousness, what pitfalls there yawn on all sides for us, what openings in our armour (if spiritual armour we have) for Satan's deadly thrusts, what occasions for unreality, in the face of

the Truth Itself, for loss of faith when faith is our all; for murmuring against Divine justice when about to appear at its bar! Probably those evil deaths after specious lives, have had this in common, that it was the evil passion to which such men had often secretly given way, a smothered, smouldering, but unextinguished fire, which burst out at last and destroyed them. I have known of relapse into the deadly accustomed sin on the bed of death.

Since then death has enough of trial in itself for the grace of God to master, since those trials are aggravated by all unconquered evil in our whole life, since a good death is the object of our life, and such as we are in life, such we shall almost surely be in death, and what we are in death, such we shall certainly be in all eternity, what remains but that we make all our life a preparation for eternity?

Heathen wisdom saw a gleam of this. "Who closes best his last day?" one was asked. "He who ever set before him, that the last day of life was imminent." Not without inspiration of God was that counsel, "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never do amiss<sup>6</sup>."

It was a good old-fashioned practice, morning by morning, to think of the four last things, death, judgment, heaven, hell, and to pray to live that day as one would wish to have lived when the last day came. We cannot imagine to ourselves that any

<sup>6</sup> Eccl. vii. 36.

given day will be our last. It was said of old, "No one is so old, as not to think that he shall live yet one year more<sup>7</sup>." Vitality is strong within us, and it would be unreal to try to make this a motive for action. So, as to lying down in one's bed, as though one should not wake. The human mind gets accustomed to the thought, and may easily enact it unreally. But, although, humanly speaking, our anticipations are true; although the cases of sudden death are rare, compared with the multitude of those who do not die suddenly; although God mercifully, for the most part, gives us intimations of our death (for those who know that they bear about them a disease which ends in an instant do not in this sense die a sudden death), yet every day is a part of our death, and enters into it. For death, which sums up all, gathers into one the results of each of our days; and each day as we live well or ill, through the grace of God or our own fault, is the earnest of many like days beyond. It is a stern nakedness of truth, stern only because it is so true; "He is not worthy to be called a Christian, who lives in that state, wherein he would fear to die." For nothing makes death fearful, except the fear of all fears, lest we be separate from Christ.

You, my sons, naturally cannot think death near. You think mostly that you have many years before you. Youth often sinks down in the

<sup>7</sup> Cic. de Senect.

grave before age. Yet, humanly speaking, you are right. May you live those many years to the glory of God, and gain a full reward! Yet the question for each is, not how many days I shall live. They were not more holy before the flood. Those centuries of life brought no nearer to God those to whom the flood was not a mere temporal punishment. The years of the oldest, nay, of Methuselah, when past, are but a point, but the twinkling of an eye, except for what they bear in them, good or bad. The question is, not what we have in store, but what is our to-day. It is not the physical, but the moral aspect of to-day, upon which our eternity hangs. It is not the question, *How long* we shall live, but *how* we live. Your past has been the parent of the present; your present will be the parent of the future. As you lived when younger, such, unless there has come some turning to God, or some turning away from Him, is your life now. Age matures the fruit of youth; it does not change its nature. The apples of Sodom, fresh, blooming, rich in colour, have enlarged to their gigantic size, but have, therewith, become dust at the core. The sapling which a boy's weakness could bend at will, cannot, some years later, be riven by a giant's strength. So is it in things of nature, the pictures of ourselves. So is it with free-will. Look at the two extremities of free-will, as it is enfreed and Deiform through grace, or enslaved and imbruted by sin, you can scarce trace its first balancings,

before grace had perfected it or sin had deadened it, so that those who know nothing of the secret history of the supernatural life deny its existence.

To-day is ever "the day of salvation." Thou art more in thine own power now, than thou wouldst be to-morrow. God appeals to you anew, "I have set before you life and death. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit. For why will ye die? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn and live ye." Turn, and the Death of Jesus shall be your life; for He died that we might live; He died to redeem our forfeited life, to hallow our regenerate life, to live in us; to be our life; to be our victory in death. Turn to Him. Look up to His bleeding Hands; His thorn-crowned sacred Head; His meek Eye of love. Thank Him, bless Him; fear for yourself while you bless Him, and bless Him while you fear; He will make a holy reverent awe sweeter than all earthly joy; He will be thy strength in life, thy fearlessness in death, thy joy in eternity. So shall we ever be with the Lord, evermore thanking and blessing Him, and, of His personal mercies to us, most perhaps for that first prevailing thought of reverent fear, "Am I fit to meet Jesus thus?"



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